

THE
**FUTURE
OF
AMERICA'S
NATIONAL
PARKS**

First Annual
Centennial Strategy for

Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River

August 2007

CENTENNIAL INITIATIVE



Site: RIGR

Year: 2007

Vision Statement

The Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River (RIGR) is a recreation oriented park containing 196-miles of the Rio Grande which is available for river running and recreational use including spectacular deep and remote canyons, white water rapids, hot springs, abundant wildlife, hiking, camping, and a true wild experience during river trips lasting a possible 1-10+ days. RIGR overlaps with Big Bend National Park with the west 69-miles of RIGR within Big Bend's boundary.

A great attraction for many visitors is the wildness and remoteness of the river, which as with Big Bend, is many miles from any town. This remoteness places an extra burden on the park to provide adequate visitor services, river patrols, resource management needs and visitor information.

The Centennial vision for the park and its partners is to develop our resource management ability to restore the river and its associated habitats. Resource management needs are the ecological restoration of the Rio Grande through removal of exotic plant species and restoring natural sediment transport.

The RIGR has a number of supporters including energized partners such as the World Wildlife Fund, the Rio Grande Institute, non governmental organizations. Hundreds of park volunteers are already hard at work but accomplishments would grow exponentially with Centennial support.

Park management and its partners stand ready, willing and able for opportunities of the Centennial Challenge.

Park/ Superintendent/ Program Manager

William E. Wellman

Site: RIGR

STEWARDSHIP

☒ Provide inspiring, safe, and accessible places for people to enjoy - the standard to which all other park systems aspire.

☒ Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

The management team of the Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River will engage its partners to provide a big picture, inspiring visitor experience: a first time auditorium (located at Panther Junction within Big Bend National Park) with a park film to highlight and provide safe and better informed visits. Once completed the film would also be offered at Persimmon Gap Visitor Center which is the designated RIGR visitor center within Big Bend.

Additionally, restoration of the Rio Grande's banks will allow safer, more enjoyable river use through greater beach and shoreline access for scouting rapids, camping and boat landings by removal of the exotic plant species which now choke the riverbank.

☒ The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS

Site: RIGR

ENVIRONMENT

☒ Engage partners, communities, and visitors in shared environmental stewardship.

☒ Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

The management team of the Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River proposes to engage our communities and partners through a combined effort to restore the Rio Grande by removing exotic species, re-establishing native plant communities and restoring natural sediment transport. This effort will not only be a hands-on restoration project, but a long term visitor education effort through park films, exhibits and interpretive programming designed to reach park visitors, partners and communities regarding this story and its processes.

The benefits of Rio Grande restoration efforts will also go far beyond the park's borders benefiting the many landowners downstream of the park through greater flows and improved water quality as a result of this project.

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Site: RIGR

RECREATION

☒ Establish "volun-tourism" excursions to national parks for volunteers to help achieve natural and cultural resource protection goals.

☒ Increase annual volunteer hours by 100 percent, from 5.2 million hours to 10.4 million hours.

The management team of the Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River proposes to engage our communities, partners and many volunteers for a combined effort to restore the Rio Grande by removing exotic species, re-establishing native plant communities and restoring natural sediment transport. This volunteer part of the restoration effort will be a hands-on restoration project to remove exotic plant species and replant with native vegetation.

The benefits of Rio Grande restoration efforts will also go far beyond the park's borders benefiting the many landowners downstream of the park through greater flows and improved water quality as a result of this project.

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Site: RIGR

EDUCATION

☒ Promote life-long learning to connect generations through park experiences.

☒ Enroll an additional two million children in the Junior Ranger program.

The Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River is a 196-mile long resource that is a diverse, recreation oriented part of the national park system and which currently is without an auditorium or park film. This same need is identified for Big Bend National Park which administers the RIGR. This is a need identified in the 2004 GMP for Big Bend National Park. This facility will be used to educate and excite park visitors to the wonders of both parks, to provide for safe and well oriented visits and to provide knowledge of the numerous recreational and educational activities available in both parks

This service, a park film, has been shown by research to be one the most effective means of reaching visitors and is one that visitors expect and request when entering the parks.

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Site: RIGR

PROFESSIONALISM

☒ Promote a safety and health culture for all employees and visitors.

☒ Reduce the number of employee lost-time incidents and serious visitor injuries by 20 percent.

The Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River is a truly wild and diverse national park having a remote terrain along the 196-mile stretch of river. Effective orientation and safety information is essential to a safe enjoyable visit. Unlike most NPS areas, neither the RIGR nor Big Bend has an auditorium or a park film to provide basic information for our visitors. The addition of these facilities will be a significant step in reducing visitor accidents and injuries since a park film has been shown by research to be one the most effective means of reaching visitors and is a service that visitors expect and request when entering the parks.

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Site: RIGR

PROFESSIONALISM

☒ Model what it means to work in partnership.

☒ Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

The Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River has a number of very active and very involved partners who give to the park in many forms including volunteer time, monetary help and advocacy of its needs. These partners include the Friends of Big Bend National Park, a number of non governmental organizations such as the World Wildlife Fund and many individuals and groups.

The Friends of Big Bend are ready and willing to be model partners and are able to raise funds for a new auditorium and film for Big Bend - facilities which the park badly needs.

The World Wildlife Fund and the Rio Grande Institute are working in partnership to restore the Rio Grande by removing exotic plants and replanting native vegetation.

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